a negative trend in loading. The primary reason behind less loading in these two sector was due to non-availability of demand for loading.

(c) The Government has proposed to improve the rail freight revenue in future by increasing the physical loading and by rationalising the tariff structure. To increase the physical loading, Railways are going in for increased proliferation of enhanced axle load running, removal of bottlenecks to traffic, speedier completion of throughput enhancement works and rapid induction of newer rolling stock. Alongwith this, freight marketing schemes in the form of incentives and discounts are being offered to customers to capture newer traffic thereby increasing loading and revenue. This has resulted in an increase of 8.03% in loading in the April-October, 2007 period as compared to April-October, 2006.

High-speed passenger trains

1304. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has sought feed back form various States about their willingness to have high-speed passenger trains running throught their territory and possible support in the form of land, right of way to build elevated tracks and equity for the proposed project and 12 States have already expressed interest in the proposal;

(b) if so, what are the total number of States; and

(c) by when the work on these is likely to start?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Twelve State Governments were approached by Ministry of Railways to find out their willingness for participating in pre-feasibility studies. Out of twelve, nine State-Governments namely Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu Bengal have agreed 'in principle' to participate in any pre-feasibility studies and for possible support in form of land, right of way to build elevated tracks and equity for proposed project.

(c) This proposal is in its initial stages. Pre-feasibility studies are to be conducted. These studies will take about 2 years. On the basis of recommendations of these studies, decision to start the work will be taken.

Bogibeel rail-cum-road bridge

1305. SHRI SILVIUS CONDPAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the present progress of construction of Bogibeel rail-cum-road bridge over Brahmaputra river in Assam and by when the project would be completed;

(b) whether his Ministry is agreeable to have rail-cum-road bridge by the side of Sarai Ghat rail-cum-road bridge in case NHAI agrees to;

(c) whether there is any programme during Eleventh Plan to lay double track railway system from Bongaigaon to Tinsukia Junction under N.F. Railway;

(d) whether conversion of all the rail tracks under N.F. Railway to broad gauge line would be completed during Eleventh Plan; and

(e) what is the present progress of Lumding-Badarpur railway gauge conversion work under N.F. Railways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Bogibeel rail-cum-road bridge over river Brahmaputra in Assam has been declared as a National Project. Tender for collection of boulders for protection works, earthwork for embankments, bridges and station buildings for link lines etc. have been awarded and works taken up. Tender for main bridge is under process. The project is targeted for completion by 2011-12 subject to availability of resources.

(b) Prima facie, there is no need for having another rail bridge at Saraighat from traffic considerations. However, survey for second rail bridge at Saraighat has been taken up.

(c) With the completion of Rangia-Murkongselek gauge conversion alongwith rail-cum-road bridge at Bogibeel, two broad gauge tracks between Bongaigaon and Tinsukia will become available. Both these projects are targeted for completion by the end of Eleventh Plan subject to availability of resources.

(d) All efforts will be made to convert the majority of the meter gauge lines to broad gauge during the 11th Five Year Plan.

(e) On Lumding-Badarpur section, 369 lac cum out of 460 lac cum earthwork, 9 out of 73 major bridges, 252 out of 316 minor bridges, 2649 m out of 16764 m tunneling and 18354 cum out of 490000 cum ballast collection have been completed.

New programmes to facilitate pilgrims on the Buddhist circuit

1306. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether new programmes are being taken up by the Railways to facilitate the pilgrims on the Buddhist circuit;

(b) if so, the details of the programmes; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) In order to facilitate the pilgrims on Buddhist circuit, a special train called Mahaparinivran Express was introduced during the year by Indian Railways Catering & Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), a public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Railways, with an all inclusive package of rail travel, road travel, accommodation, sight-seeing, onboard/ off board meals etc. The one week intinerary includes major Buddhist destinatioins like Gaya, Bodhgaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Varanasi, Sarnath, Kushinagar, Lumbini, Sravasti etc.

(c) Does not arise.

Trivandrum Rajdhani Express

1307. MS. MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether New Delhi-Trivandrum route has the heavy rush of passengers;